

TERRY ALLEN

THE EXACT MOMENT IT HAPPENS IN THE WEST

STORIES, PICTURES AND SONGS FROM THE '60S 'TIL NOW

26 JUNE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2019

ARTIST RECEPTION: WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE, 6-8PM



Montezuma 6 Castle, 1969-75, mixed media on paper
24 x 19 1/4 in. (61 x 48.9 cm)

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition by visual artist, musician and playwright Terry Allen. The exhibition asserts the central role of drawing and working on paper, as the continuum through which Allen's ideas take shape, and features works that span the length of his multifarious career. With nearly 100 drawings dating from the '60s to the present, the show extends throughout the gallery's first and second floor spaces, and also includes sculptural objects, video installations and audio from his various albums and radio plays – demonstrating the tremendous breadth of Allen's life and work as told through stories, pictures and songs.

Narratives, songs, dramas, drawings, installation, films, collages, and sculptures each do something the others can't. So with all these options at his disposal, Terry Allen selects the idiom most suited to his local intention. Then, if the pastel drawing of a bird suggests a song, a song comes forth. The idea is to not miss the exit, to take the chances that present themselves and let the line of least resistance lead him on. – Dave Hickey

Eschewing terminologies and aesthetic boundaries, Terry Allen seamlessly wields music, visuals and performance into a singular language of expression. By examining the artist's drawing practice, we thereby gain entry into his vast imaginative orbit. Early examples include works from *Cowboy and the Stranger* (1969), where Allen began to explore the parallels of sound and imagery, with drawings and songs made in parity. Probing the space between “looking” and “listening,” this bilateral approach was firmly established with the recording of his seminal album *Juarez* (1975), and a complement of phantasmagorical works on paper (1969-75) that match the tone, tenor and mystery of their musical counterpart. Collectively, they described the travels and travails of two couples across the Western United States and its southern border whose paths converged in a violent clash. It was from this series that Allen enlightened to the possibilities of narrative-driven works. “I realized what I really wanted to do was tell stories.”

Allen obliquely referenced his own personal histories in *Ring* (1976-80), marital strife played out in a wrestling match, and *Anterabbit/Bleeder* (1981-83), a hemophiliac evangelist/gambler loosely based on a childhood friend. These stories led to scripted performances with actors, including his wife Jo Harvey Allen, assuming the character roles, as well as drawings and objects made as accoutrements or material evidence of the stories at play. Mixed-media drawings from his expansive body of work *Youth in Asia* (1983-93) addressed the betrayals and aftermath of the Vietnam War through the lived accounts of those he knew -- incidents Allen further synthesized into sculptures, poetry, installations, a music album *Amerasia* and a radio play *Torso Hell*. Equally ambitious in scope, *Dugout* (1999-2006) gathered the familial stories of “truths, half-truths, half-lies, lies” as told by his father, a retired major league baseball player, and mother, a professional barrel house piano player. In addition to select drawings and excerpts of the radio play from that series, the exhibition includes the large wall construction *Ancient* (2000-01) – a staged tableau of objects and images lyrically arranged like a tangible memory. A deeply personal reflection on memories, the video installation

MemWars (2016) demystifies the origins of his songs through stories recounted by Allen and Jo Harvey, and is accompanied by a spate of related drawings that layer images with collaged texts.

Like a bird tracing its prey, Allen closes on his subjects by using every medium within his arsenal. But once arriving at their core, often discovers another universe of ideas therein – the hole is greater than the sum of its parts. Above all, Allen is a storyteller, and across the multitude, his voice remains constant and in perpetual motion. “I think that’s what art does,” Allen says. “It takes you into these weird circles back into yourself, but all different, and it also takes you places you never in a million years thought you’d ever go.”

Terry Allen was born in 1943, and raised in Lubbock, Texas. In 1962, he moved to Los Angeles with his wife Jo Harvey Allen, and graduated from Chouinard Art Institute in 1966. He has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including fellowships from the Guggenheim and the National Endowment for the Arts, a United States Artist Oliver Fellow, and an inductee into the Buddy Holly Walk of Fame. His art has been shown throughout the United States and Europe, and is represented in major public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Modern Art, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Allen has recorded 12 albums of original music, including the classics *Juarez*, *Lubbock (on everything)* and *Salivation*, and has written songs for artists such as David Byrne and Lucinda Williams. *Pedal Steal + Four Corners*, a CD/vinyl compilation of Allen’s longform narrative works and radio plays, was issued by Paradise of Bachelors earlier this year. In 2020, Allen will release an album of new material. He lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Austin, Texas with his wife Jo Harvey Allen.



The Exact Moment (MemWars), 2018-19, mixed media on paper, 30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.9 cm)

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Events

Terry Allen and the Panhandle Mystery Band: Zebulon, 18 + 19 July 2019, 7pm

For two special nights, Allen will perform a suite of new, unreleased songs, and a selection of his “greatest missed hits” from seminal albums and cult classics *Juarez* and *Lubbock (on everything)*. Tickets \$30 (standing only).

Artist Conversation: Hammer Museum, 7 August 2019, 7:30pm

Terry and Jo Harvey Allen will join Hammer Museum curator Aram Moshayedi for a conversation with readings and music excerpts from Terry Allen’s audio and theater pieces. Free event.

Limited Release

Terry Allen: Cowboy and the Stranger

Cassette Tape, edition of 500

A co-release of L.A. Louver and Paradise of Bachelors, *Cowboy and the Stranger* features previously unreleased demos and work tapes of songs Allen wrote and recorded in the '60s. Release date: 19 June 2019.

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Third Eye

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